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BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

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the United States of America.)

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"What is truth?" asked Pilate, and when he asked the question he went out without waiting for an answer. The question has been asked many times and answered in many different ways. I was reminded of a similar question when I read over the door of a court house in Aligarh, India, the motto, "Justice is the strength of the British Empire."

"No empire, no government, no society can have any other source of permanent strength. Lord Salisbury is quoted by Indian leaders as saying, "Injustice will bring down the mightiest to ruin," and we all believe it. Wendell Phillips expressed it as strongly and even more beautifully (I quote from memory): "You may build your capitals until they reach the skies, but if they rest upon injustice, the pulse of a woman will beat them down."

But what is justice? How varied are the answers given! The subject, in the name of justice, presents his appeal to his king, and the sovereign, if he be a despot, may send him to exile, or the prison, or the block and do it in the name of justice.

What is justice? The question has been ringing in my ears during our journey through India.

When I was a law student, I read the speech of Sheridan at the trial of Warren Hastings, and that

masterpiece of invective was recalled sixteen years later when a colonial policy began to be suggested in the United States, after the taking of Manila, and I tried to inform myself in regard to British rule in India.

The more I read about it, the more unjust it seemed. So many Americans have, however, during the last few years spoken admirably of England's colonial system that I have looked forward to the visit to India with increasing interest, because of the opportunity it would give me to study at close range a question of vital importance to our country.

I have met some of the leading English officials, as well as a number in subordinate positions; have talked with educated Indians—Hindus, Mahomedans, and Parsis; have seen the people, rich and poor, in the cities and in the country, and have examined statistics and read speeches, reports, petitions, and other literature that does not find its way to the United States; and British rule in India is far worse, far more burdensome to the people, and far more unjust—if I understand the meaning of the word—than I had supposed.

When I say this I do not mean to bring an indictment against the English people or to assert that they are guilty of international wrongdoing. Neither do I mean to question the motives of those in authority.

GOOD MEN IN OFFICE—BUT.

It has been my good fortune to become personally acquainted with Lord Minto, the present Viceroy; with Lieutenant-Governor Fraser, the chief executive of the province of Bengal; with Lieutenant-Governor La Touche, chief executive of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and with Governor Lamington, chief executive of the Bombay Presidency, three of the large-

est Indian States. These men, I am sure, represent the highest type of their countrymen.

Lord Minto is fresh from Canada, where he was Governor-General; Governor Lamington was the head of the Australian Government before coming to India, and both Governor Fraser and Governor La Touche have long official experience to their credit. That they will be just, as they understand justice, and do right, as they see right, I am satisfied; but what is justice?

The trouble is that England acquired India for England's advantage, not for India's, and that she holds India for England's benefit, not for India's. She administers India with an eye to England's interests, not India's, and she passes judgment upon every question as a judge would were he permitted to decide his own case.

The officials in India owe their appointment directly or indirectly to the Home Government, and the Home Government holds authority at the sufferance of the people of England, not of the people of India. The officials who go out from England to serve a certain time, and then return, whose interests are in England, rather than in India, and whose sympathies are naturally with the British, rather than with the Natives, cannot be expected to view questions from the same standpoint as the Indians. Neither can these officials be expected to know the needs of the people as well as those who share their daily life and aspirations.

COMPANY RULE AND NATIONAL RULE.

It is not necessary to review the earlier rule under the East India Company; that is sufficiently condemned by public record. The company was chartered for commercial purposes, and its rule had no other than a pecuniary aim. It secured control of State

after State by helping one Native Prince against another, where it did not actually instigate war between princes.

The English government finally took the country over, confessedly because of the outrageous conduct of the company's officials. No one now defends the rule of the East India Company, although Warren Hastings was finally acquitted by the House of Lords in spite of his crimes, out of consideration for his public services in extending English authority.

Is English rule in India just, as we find it today? Fortunately England permits free speech in England, although she has sometimes restricted it in her Colonies, and there has not been a public question under consideration in England for a century which has not brought out independent opinion.

It is the glory of England that she was an early champion of freedom of speech, and it is the glory of Englishmen that they criticise their own Government when they think it wrong. During the American Revolution Burke thundered his defense of the rights of the Colonists, and Walpole warned his countrymen that they could not destroy American liberty without asserting principles which, if carried on, would destroy English liberty as well.

ENGLAND CONDEMNED BY ENGLISHMEN.

During the recent war in South Africa the British had no more severe critics than were to be found among her own people and in her own Parliament. Today British rule in India is as forcibly arraigned by Englishmen as by the Indians themselves.

While Mr. Naoroji, an Indian, goes to England and secures from a meeting of a Radical club the adoption of a resolution reciting that as "Britain has appro-

priated thousands of millions of India's wealth for building up and maintaining her British Indian Empire and for drawing directly vast wealth to herself;" that as "she is continuing to drain about £30,000,000 of India's wealth every year unceasingly in a variety of ways," and that as "she has thereby reduced the bulk of the Indian population to extreme poverty, destitution, and degradation; it is, therefore, her bounden duty in common justice and humanity to pay from her own exchequer the cost of all famines and diseases caused by such impoverishment;" and, further, "that it is most humiliating and discreditable to the British name that other countries should be appealed to or should have to come to Britain's help for relief of Britain's own subjects, and after and by her un-British rule of about 150 years"—while, I repeat, Mr. Naoroji was securing the unanimous adoption of the above resolution in England, Sir Henry Cotton, now a member of Parliament, but for thirty-five years a member of the Indian Civil Service, was preparing his book, "New India," in which he courageously points out the injustice from which India now suffers.

Neither he nor Mr. Naoroji suggests Indian independence. Both believe that English sovereignty should continue, but Sir Henry Cotton shows the wrongs now inflicted upon India and the necessity for reform.

PROMISES DELIBERATELY BROKEN.

Not only does he charge that the promises of the Queen have been ignored, and Indians excluded from services for which they were fitted, but he charges that the antagonism between the officials and the people is growing and that there is among civilian magis-

trates "an undoubted tendency to inflict severe sentences when Natives of India are concerned, and to impose light and sometimes inadequate punishment upon offenders of their own race," and that "in trials in which Englishmen are tried by English juries" the result is sometimes "a failure of justice not falling short of judicial scandal."

If justice cannot be found in the courts, where shall she be sought?

After the Indian Mutiny the Queen, in a Proclamation, promised that Natives should be freely and impartially admitted to offices, "the duties of which they might be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity to discharge." Lord Lytton, a Viceroy of India, in a confidential document which got into print, speaking of the pledges of the Sovereign and the Parliament of England, said:

"We all know that these claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled. We have had to choose between prohibiting them (the Natives of India) and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course."

And again:

"Since I am writing confidentially, I do not hesitate to say that both the Governments of England and of India appear to me, up to the present moment, unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they had uttered to the ear."

WORSE THAN RUSSIAN DESPOTISM.

The Government of India is as arbitrary and despotic as the Government of Russia ever was, and in two respects it is worse. First, it is administered by

an alien people, whereas the officials of Russia are Russians. Secondly, it drains a large part of the taxes out of the country, whereas the Russian Government spends at home the money which it collects from the people.

A third disadvantage might be named, since the Czar has already created a legislative body, whereas England continues to deny to the Indians any form of representative or constitutional government.

The people of India are taxed, but they have no voice in the amount to be collected or in the use to be made of the revenue. They pay into the Government nearly \$225,000,000 a year, and of this nearly \$100,000,000 is expended upon an army in which Indians cannot be officers.

It is not necessary to keep such an army merely to hold the people in subjection if the Indians are really satisfied with English rule, and if the army is intended to keep Russia from taking India, as is sometimes claimed, why should not the British Government bear a part of the burden? Would it not be wiser so to attach the Indian people to the British Government that they would themselves resist annexation to Russia?

The Home Charges, as they are called, absorb practically one-third of the entire revenue. About \$100,000,000 goes out of India to England every year; more than \$15,000,000 is paid to European officials in the civil employ. What nation could stand such a drain without impoverishment?

Taxation is nearly twice as heavy in India as in England in proportion to the income of the people. Compared with the people of other countries, the Indian's income is on the average one-twentieth of the average English income, one-seventh of the average

Spaniard's income, one-sixth of the average Italian's income, one-fifth of the (European) Russian's income, and one-half the income of the Turk.

Sir Henry Cotton shows that the average per capita deposit in banks in England is \$100, while the average per capita deposit in India is 50 cents; but how can the Indian be expected to have a large bank account when the average yearly income is \$10?

THE SILVER QUESTION.

I have, in another article, referred to the jewelry worn by Indian women. The bracelets and anklets are silver, except among the poorest, and this was formerly a form of hoarding, but the suspension of the coinage of silver deprived the people of the privilege of converting this hoarded silver into rupees.

It will be remembered that the late Senator Wolcott, a member of the Monetary Commission, appointed by President McKinley in 1897, on his return from Europe declared that the suspension of the coinage of silver in India had reduced the value of the savings of the people to the amount of \$500,000,000. The suspension was carried out for the benefit of European interests regardless of the welfare of the masses.

DEATH RATE RISING.

So great has been the drain, the injustice to the people, and the tax upon the resources of the country, that famines have increased in frequency and severity. Mr. Gokhale, one of the ablest of India's public men, presided over the meeting of the last Indian National Congress held in December, and declared in his opening speech that the death rate had steadily risen from 24 to the 1000 in 1882-84, to 30 in 1892-94, and to 34 at the present time.

I have more than once, within the last month, heard the plague referred to as a providential remedy for overpopulation. Think of it! British rule justified because "it keeps the people from killing each other," and the plague praised because it removes those whom the Government has saved from slaughter!

The railroads, with all their advantages, have been charged with adding to the weight of famine by carrying away the surplus grain in good years, leaving no residue for the years of drought. While grain can now be carried back more easily in times of scarcity, the people are too poor to buy it with two freights added. The storage of grain by the Government at central points until the new crop is safe would bring some relief, but it has not been attempted.

If it is argued that the railroads have raised the price of grain in the interior by furnishing a cheaper outlet to the sea, it must be remembered that the benefit has accrued, not to the people, but to the landlords, the Government being the largest holder.

MONEY FOR AN ARMY, NONE FOR IRRIGATION.

Not only are the people being impoverished, but the land is being worn out. Manure, which ought to be used to renew the fields, is consumed as fuel, and no sight is more common in India than that of women and children gathering manure from the roads with their hands. This, when mixed with straw and sun dried, is used in place of wood, and from the amount of it carried in baskets it must be a chief article of merchandise.

There are now large tracts of useless land that might be brought under cultivation if the irrigation system were extended. Proof of this is to be found in the fact that the Government of India has already

approved of extensions which, when made, will protect 7,000,000 acres and irrigate 3,000,000 acres.

The estimated cost of these extensions is about \$45,000,000, and the plans are to be carried out "as funds can be provided." Ten per cent of the army expenditure applied to irrigation would complete the system within five years, but instead of military expenses being reduced, the army appropriation was increased more than \$10,000,000 between 1904 and 1905.

Of the total amount raised from taxation each year about 40 per cent is raised from land, and the rate is so heavy that the people cannot save enough when the crops are good to feed themselves when the crops are bad. More than 10 per cent of the total tax is collected on salt, which now pays about five-eighths of a cent a pound.

This is not only a heavy rate, when compared with the original cost of the salt, but it is especially burdensome to the poor. The salt tax has been as high as one cent a pound, and when at that rate materially reduced the amount of salt consumed by the people.

The poverty of the people of India is distressing in the extreme; millions live on the verge of starvation all the time, and one would think that their very appearance would plead successfully in their behalf.

WHY NOT SELF-GOVERNMENT.

The economic wrong done to the people of India explains the political wrong done to them. For more than twenty years an Indian National Congress has been pleading for a modified form of representative government—not for a severing of the tie that binds India to Great Britain, but for an increased voice in their local affairs.

This request cannot be granted. Why? Because a local government, composed of Natives selected by

the people, would protest against so large an army, reduce the taxes, and put Indians at lower salaries into places now held by Europeans.

It is the fear of what an Indian local government would do that prevents the experiment, although two other reasons, both insufficient, are given. One of these is that the Indian people are not intelligent enough and that they must be protected from themselves by denying them a voice in their own affairs. The other is that the Indians are so divided into tribes and religious sects that they cannot act harmoniously.

The first argument will not impress any unprejudiced traveler who has come into contact with the educated classes. There are enough informed, college trained men in India, not to speak of those who, like our own ancestors a few centuries ago, have practical sense and good judgment without book learning, to guide public opinion.

BRITISH ARGUMENTS ANSWERED.

While the percentage of literacy is deplorably small, the total number of educated men is really considerable, and there are at this time 17,000 students above the secondary schools and studying for the B.A. degree. There is not a district of any considerable size that has not some intelligent men in it, and these could be relied upon to direct the government until a larger number are qualified to assist.

It is true that Native Princes have often seemed indifferent to the welfare of their subjects—princes who have lived in great luxury while the people have been neglected—but today some of the Native States vie with those controlled by European officials in education and material advancement. Is not the very fact that the people are left under the government of Native

Princes in the Native States conclusive proof that in all the States the government could be administered without the aid of so large a number of Europeans?

The second argument is equally unsound. To say that the Indians would necessarily fight among themselves is to ignore the progress of the world.

There was a time when Europe was the scene of bloody religious wars, and our country is indebted to the persecution of the Pilgrims in England for some of its best pioneers. There has been a growth in religious tolerance during the last century, and this is as noticeable in India as elsewhere.

Already the intellectual leaders of all the sects and elements of the Indian population are mingling in congresses, conferences, and public meetings. Already a national spirit is growing which, like the national spirit in England and America, disregards religious lines and emphasizes more and more the broad social needs which are common to all; and with the increase of general education there will be still more unity and national sentiment.

Those who make this argument also forget that as long as England maintains sovereignty it will be impossible for religious differences to lead to war, and that differences in council and in congress would strengthen rather than weaken her position.

NATIVES EXCLUDED FROM OFFICE.

Why is there lack of intelligence among the Indians? Have they not had the blessings of British rule for several generations? Why have they not been fitted for self-government?

Gladstone, whose greatness of head and heart shed a lustre upon all Europe, said: "It is liberty alone which fits men for liberty. This proposition, like every

other in politics, has its bounds. but it is far safer than the counter doctrine, wait till they are fit."

How long will it take to fit the Indians for self-government when they are denied the benefits of experience? They are excluded from the higher Civil Service (ostensibly open to them) by cunningly devised systems of examinations, which make it impossible for them to enter.

Not only are the people thus robbed of opportunities which rightfully belong to them, but the country is deprived of the accumulated wisdom that would come with service, for the alien officials return to Europe at the end of their service, carrying back their wisdom and earnings, not to speak of the pensions which they then begin to draw.

AT A STANDSTILL UNDER BRITISH RULE.

The illiteracy of the Indian people is a disgrace to the proud nation which, for a century and a half, has controlled their destiny. The editor of the "Indian World," a Calcutta magazine, says in last February's number:

"If India has not yet been fit for free institutions, it is certainly not her fault. If, after one and a half centuries of British rule, India remains where she was in the Middle Ages, what a sad commentary must it be upon the civilizing influences of that rule!

"When the English came to India, this country was the leader of Asiatic civilization and the undisputed center of light in the Asiatic world. Japan was nowhere.

"Now, in fifty years, Japan has revolutionized her history with the aid of modern arts of progress, and India, with 150 years of English rule, is still condemned to tutelage."

Who will answer the argument presented by this Indian editor? And he might have made it stronger.

Japan, the arbiter of her own destiny and the guardian of her own people, has in half a century bounded from illiteracy to a position where 90 per cent of her people can read and write, and is now thought worthy to enter into an Anglo-Japanese alliance; while India, condemned to political servitude and sacrificed for the commercial advantage of another nation, still sits in darkness, less than 1 per cent of her women able to read and write, and less than 10 per cent of her total population sufficiently advanced to communicate with each other by letter or to gather knowledge from the printed page.

ILLITERACY DESPITE HIGH TAXES.

In the speech above referred to, Mr. Gokhale estimates that four villages out of every five are without a schoolhouse, and this, too, in the country where the people stagger under an enormous burden of taxation. The published statement for 1904-5 shows that the general Government appropriated but \$6,500,000 for education, while more than \$90,000,000 were appropriated for "army services," and the revised estimate for the next year shows an increase of a little more than \$500,000 for education, while the army received an increase of more than \$12,000,000.

The Government has, it is true, built a number of colleges (with money raised by taxation), and it is gradually extending the system of primary and secondary schools (also with taxes), but the progress is exceedingly slow and the number of schools grossly inadequate. Benevolent Englishmen have also aided the cause of education by establishing private schools and colleges under Church and other control, but the

amount returned to India in this way is insignificant when compared with the amount drawn by England from India.

It is not scarcity of money that delays the spread of education in India, but the deliberate misappropriation of taxes collected, and the system which permits this disregard of the welfare of the subjects, and the subordination of their industries to the supposed advancement of another nation's trade is as indefensible upon political and economic grounds as upon moral grounds.

NATIONAL SPIRIT AWAKENING.

If more attention were given to the intellectual progress of the people and more regard shown for their wishes, it would not require many soldiers to compel loyalty to England; neither would it require a large army to preserve peace and order.

If agriculture were protected and encouraged and Native industries built up and diversified, England's commerce with India would be greater, for prosperous people would buy more than can be sold to India to-day, when so many of her sons and daughters are like walking shadows.

Lord Curzon, the most brilliant of India's Viceroy's of recent years, inaugurated a policy of reaction. He not only divided Bengal, with a view to lessening the political influence of the great province, but he adopted an educational system which the Indians believe was intended to discourage higher education among the Native population.

The result, however, was exactly the opposite of that which was intended. It aroused the Indians and made them conscious of the possession of powers which they had not before employed. As the cold autumn

wind scatters winged seeds far and wide, so Lord Curzon's administration spread the seeds of a national sentiment, and there is more life in India today, and therefore more hope, than there has ever been before. So high has feeling run against the Government that there has been an attempted boycott of English-made goods, and there is now a well-organized movement to encourage the use of goods made in India.

INDIA AND COLONIALISM.

Let no one cite India as an argument in defense of colonialism. On the Ganges and the Indus the Briton, in spite of his many noble qualities and his large contributions to the world's advancement, has demonstrated, as many have before, man's inability to exercise with wisdom and justice, irresponsible power over helpless people. He has conferred some benefits upon India, but he has extorted a tremendous price for them.

While he has boasted of bringing peace to the living he has led millions to the peace of the grave; while he has dwelt upon order established between warring troops he has impoverished the country by legalized pillage. Pillage is a strong word, but no refinement of language can purge the present system of its iniquity.

How long will it be before the quickened conscience of England's Christian people will heed the petition that swells up from fettered India and apply to Briton's greatest Colony the doctrines of human brotherhood that have given to the Anglo-Saxon race the prestige that it enjoys?

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